

*This excerpt from a science fiction novel is set in the 1860s. In this part of the story, Captain Nemo and Professor Aronnax, the narrator, leave their submarine, the Nautilus, to explore the sea bottom somewhere in the Atlantic Ocean.*

## from 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea

by Jules Verne

Captain Nemo pushed on unhesitatingly through the maze of rocks covering the floor of the Atlantic. He knew this dark route. He had undoubtedly been here often, and there was no danger of his getting lost. I followed him with unshakable confidence. He seemed like a spirit of the waters, and when he walked in front of me, I admired his tall build outlined in black against the lights on the horizon.

It was one in the morning. We had arrived at the foot of the mountain. But in order to climb it we had to go up difficult paths through a vast forest.

Yes, it was a forest of dead trees, without leaves or sap, trees petrified by the sea, with an occasional gigantic pine towering high into the water. It was like a coal field still standing, holding on to the furrowed soil with its roots, and its branches looking as if they had been delicately cut out of black paper. . . . The paths were cluttered with seaweed and sea wrack, and among it crawled a whole world of shellfish. I climbed up rocks and stepped over fallen tree trunks, breaking the sea vines stretching from one tree to another and startling the fish flying from branch to branch. In my excitement I no longer felt any fatigue. I followed my guide, who never seemed to tire.



What a sight! How can I describe it? How can I depict the spectacle of these woods and rocks in the midst of the water, their undersides dark and forbidding, their upper sides tinted with the red light whose intensity was increased as it was reflected by the water? We would climb over rocks, enormous chunks of which would then fall down with the mute rumbling sound of an avalanche. On either side of the path were hollowed-out dark caves in which one could see nothing, and I occasionally wondered if some inhabitant of these underwater regions was not suddenly going to spring up before me.

But Captain Nemo kept on climbing. I did not want to lag behind, and I followed boldly. My stick helped me greatly. One false step would have been dangerous on these narrow paths beside huge chasms; but I walked resolutely, without the slightest feeling of giddiness. . . . There were huge rocks resting on strangely shaped bases, leaning as if to defy the laws of gravity. Between their stony joints trees sprouted up like jets of water under great pressure, and supported other trees which in turn helped support them. Then there were natural towers with sheer walls between them, all leaning at an angle that would have been impossible on land.

And I could also feel a difference brought about by the density of the water, for in spite of my heavy costume, my copper helmet and metal soles, I could climb up almost impossibly steep slopes . . . !

7 I realize that my description of this underwater excursion must be scarcely credible. But I am fated to recount things which, although apparently impossible, are in fact real and undeniable. It wasn't a dream, but something I saw and felt!

Two hours after leaving the *Nautilus* we had passed the tree line, and a hundred feet above rose the mountain peak which stood between us and the brilliant light coming from the other side. Several petrified shrubs ran in twisting, zigzag lines. Schools of fish rose from beneath our feet like birds flushed in high grass. . . . My blood would curdle when I would see a huge feeler blocking my path, or hear frightful pincers snapping shut in the shadows of some hollow! Thousands of luminous spots shone in the midst of the darkness. They were the eyes of giant shellfish hidden in their lairs, huge lobsters drawing themselves up like soldiers and moving their claws with a metallic clanking noise, titanic crabs set like guns on their carriages, and frightful octopuses intertwining their tentacles like an underbrush of live snakes. . . .

Where was I? What was this place to which Captain Nemo had led me?

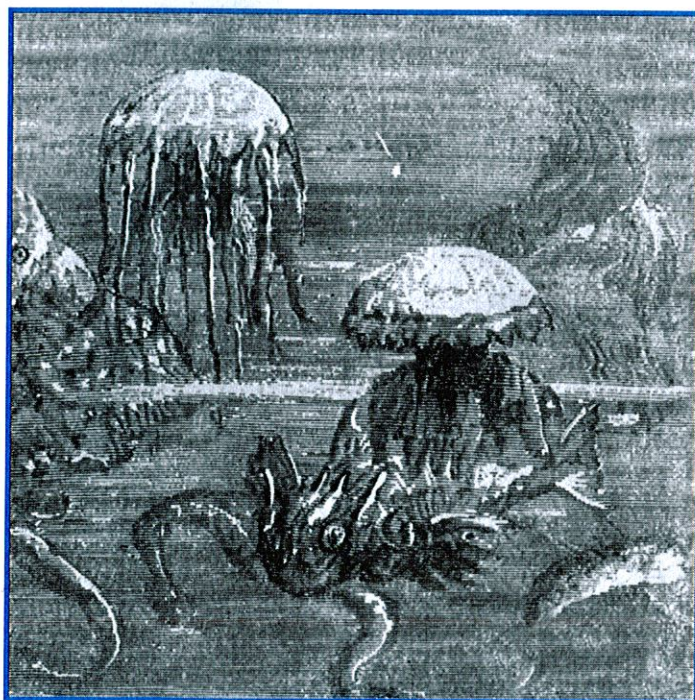
I wanted to ask him. But since I could not, I stopped and seized his arm. He merely shook his head and pointed to the highest point on the mountain, as if to say: "Come on! Follow me! Further on!"

I followed him in a last burst of effort, and in several minutes I had climbed the peak rising fifty or so feet above the surrounding mass of rocks. . . .

12 And in fact, there beneath my eyes, ruined, crumbled, and destroyed, lay a town with its roofs caved in, its temples falling down, its arches out of place and its columns lying on the ground. . . . Captain Nemo was showing me an entire Pompeii buried beneath the ocean!

Where was I? I had to know. I wanted to speak—I wanted to tear off the copper helmet enclosing my head.

But Captain Nemo came over and took me by the arm. He then picked up a piece of chalky stone and went over to a rock of black basalt, where he wrote only a single word: *ATLANTIS*.



18. Based on the selection, which phrase *best* describes Captain Nemo?
- A confident and energetic
  - B fearful and hesitant
  - C confused and nervous
  - D haughty and nonchalant
19. To what does the narrator compare the underwater forest?
- A soldiers
  - B birds' nests
  - C a coal field
  - D snakes
20. In paragraph 12, the narrator says, "Captain Nemo was showing me an entire Pompeii . . ." To what does this allusion *most likely* refer?
- A a painting
  - B an ancient buried city
  - C a present-day city
  - D a map
21. Which part of the selection seems *most* believable?
- A the discovery of the lost city of Atlantis
  - B a two-hour hike up submerged mountains
  - C the existence of a vast, petrified forest beneath the sea
  - D underwater exploration using diving equipment
22. In paragraph 7, what does *credible* mean?
- A understandable
  - B unbelievable
  - C interesting
  - D believable
23. Which relationship is *most similar* to the one below?
- Captain Nemo : the narrator
- A guide : leader
  - B leader : guide
  - C follower : leader
  - D guide : follower
24. Which word *best* describes the mood of the selection?
- A silly
  - B sad
  - C dreamlike
  - D angry
25. Which event or detail from this excerpt would *most likely* help the reader understand that this novel is a work of science fiction?
- A The characters observe fish, crabs, and other marine life.
  - B The characters travel in a submarine called the *Nautilus*.
  - C The characters wear heavy diving suits.
  - D The characters find the mythical city of Atlantis.